

Westing

By

Bernard K. Sandwell



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THIS booklet is issued as a token of gratitude to those kindly Westerners who conspired to make of the seven weeks which I spent between Port Arthur and Victoria an unbroken festival of pleasure and interest. It has no other justification.

In particular is this gratitude due to the officers and members of the Rotary Clubs of Fort William and Port Arthur, Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria, for their open-handed hospitality and their open-minded fellowship.

I do not expect all my Western friends, whatever their degree of Westernness, to accord with all the opinions expressed in these rambling, frivolous-serious paragraphs. But I hope they will accept them as the expression of a sincere and profound admiration for their country and their communities and their spirit of Canadianism—the admiration of a life-long Easterner whose chief regret is that he did not go West in time.

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BERNARD K. SANDWELL.

Montreal, October 18, 1918.

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A BRIGHT youth in Winnipeg, Man.,
Climbed a pole the horizon to scan.

"Montreal and Toronto—

Where can they have gone to?

Plainly, I'm now the People of Can."

A CASUAL GLANCE at the cemeteries of the towns and cities of the Prairie Provinces is sufficient to convince the beholder that the people who live there do not intend to permit themselves to die there. Even those who are cut off untimely before they have made their pile and emigrated to Victoria, B.C., are usually taken back East for burial in the ancestral plot, and the Western cemeteries must represent only a fraction of the deaths that have taken place in their respective communities. To those who are safely laid away below their treeless, grassless, shadeless surface, the desolation above them probably does no harm; but to anybody who might have to contemplate the prospect of resting there eternally it must be painful in the highest degree. As already stated, nobody does contemplate such a prospect.

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IT IS NOT hard to explain the passion for automobiles in the Prairies. Apart from their usefulness in the actual business of life in a farming community (which does not account for the fact that every city dweller has one), there is the all-important fact that they are necessary for escape. In an absolutely flat country it is impossible for a man to get out of sight of the upper windows of his house or the house of his neighbour, without getting so far away that he is below the horizon. The horizon is about twenty miles, and a really watchful wife with a field-glass can follow her husband's every footstep for a radius of fully that distance. And vice versa. The car enables the Westerner to do what the Easterner can do by walking round the corner. It gives him privacy. I have known a Westerner to put his flask in his pocket and climb in the car and run twenty miles just to have a drink.

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A LABOURING man of Vancouver
Was exceedingly fond of hors-d'oeuvres.*

"At ten dollars a pound,"

He explained, "I have found
Caviar's a digestion-improver."

*Toronto pronunciation.

IN VANCOUVER a shine costs fifteen cents. Several eminent bankers to whom I mentioned this subject assured me that they always cleaned their own boots, and I did not blame them. A gentleman of foreign extraction, whose education was not sufficient to enable him to speak more than a dozen words in English (strictly confined to the subject of his business), and whose capital investment was a small stand in the entry-way of a business building, charged me one dollar for cleaning my straw hat, a process which I think takes about twenty minutes. It is urged by labour organizers, in support of these prices, that living costs are very high in Vancouver; and if personal services of this kind were a necessity they would be high indeed. But as a matter of fact it is only the working classes (by which I mean the unionized workers who have monopolised that highly honourable term) who ever get their hats or their boots cleaned by somebody else; the ordinary citizen does the job himself and gets along on an ordinary income.

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THERE ARE PLACES in the river valleys of British Columbia where the Canadian Pacific occupies one side of the valley and the Canadian Northern the other, and when the Canadian Pacific, having arrived on the ground first, takes a notion to cross from one side to the other, the Canadian Northern has to cross in the opposite direction, because there is not room for two railways on the same side of the valley. It is just possible that railway lines are a little too thick in parts of British Columbia. However the British Columbians wanted them that way.

THE PLAINT of the Western city-dweller, as he contemplates his gigantic tax bill, is that the West is full of money but the farmers have it all. In former days, when the farmers had money, the city-dwellers got it away from them pretty speedily; but to-day the only things that the farmer will purchase are gilt-edged bonds and more farm land, and neither of these transactions brings much grist to the city-dweller's mill.

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THERE was a "grande dame" of Victoria
Whose language grew gorier and gorier.

Said she: "Ain't that sanguinary
Vancouver place muddy?

I should think the confounded rain there
would bore yer!"

THE PROPER WAY to deal with a man who cannot or will not pay his municipal taxes is to sell up his property. To the kindly Western heart this has for years appeared a brutal and tyrannical thing to do, but it is at last dawning upon the West that not to do it is equally brutal to the other taxpayers. Tax sales are now, therefore, a fairly regular occurrence; but their effectiveness is largely destroyed by the difficulties which are put in the way of the purchaser's attempt to get clear title, with the result that bidders are few and the municipality has frequently to take the property itself. An isolated empty lot is about as much use to a Western city as a flea is to a dog. Alberta is said to have a more reasonable tax-sale law than the other prairie provinces, but none of them have thoroughly mastered the idea that when once a tax sale becomes necessary the thing to do is to attract and assist purchasers as much as possible.

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REAL ESTATE signs have completely disappeared from Western property. Wood and paint are both expensive, and the investment required to maintain a board reading 'This Desirable Lot for Sale by John Smith' is greater than the chance of selling it would justify. The landscape is much improved.

A POMPOUS old person of Brandon
Each morning and evening would stand on
The corner and jolly
The municipal trolley
With remarkable vim and abandon.

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A YOUNG man of Portage la Prairie
Had a very accomplished canary.

"Private Ownership's wrong"

Were the words of its song,

And you couldn't induce it to vary.

EVERYBODY GOES to church on Sunday in the West, partly for lack of other amusements, and it must be admitted that the clergy do their best to provide a good substitute for the movies. You are as likely to hear the Provincial Premier or the mayor denounced from the pulpit as the Devil or the Kaiser, and in as fervent terms. Church mortgages are large, and the money to pay the interest must be raised somehow.

One of the peculiar and pathetic delusions of the West is that we of the East are, so to speak, at the foot of the oracle in regard to current political developments. The

**WEST, EAST AND
THE GOVERNMENT**

The Westerner thinks that because Montreal is only a hundred miles or so from Ottawa, Montrealers must therefore know what is passing in the minds of Sir Robert Borden, Sir Thomas White and the Hon. Arthur Meighen even while it is passing, and long before the West gets any inkling of it, and that, knowing what they are thinking of doing before they have time to do it, we have a chance to rush up to Ottawa and stop them. The West feels itself remote, out of the current, too far off even to hear the sweep of the wings of Great Events until they have gone by into history.

It is a natural delusion, yet how utter a delusion it is! The distance between the Common Man in Canada and the Rulers of Canada is not a matter of geography, of miles on a map, of time on a railway. It is the distance between two worlds. The Common Man in Montreal, nay, the Common Man in Ottawa, is as far from the charmed circle in which Events are shaped, as if he were in Prince Rupert or Cape Breton. Common Man, did we say? The

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Common Member of Parliament is no nearer to the Sacred Melting-Pot than anybody else.

Democracy never did mean that the Common Man should be able to put his finger into the pie of legislation or administration whenever he likes and stir it round however he wishes, though the West is strongly of the opinion that it ought to mean just that. But in late years, and particularly in the latest year, Democracy in Canada has meant even less than ever before in the way of contact and reaction between the people and their rulers. We are governed by a bureaucracy, which has ceased to take even the most trivial steps to "feel out" the disposition of the people before taking important decisions. If it were an efficient bureaucracy it would probably be better than we deserve, and would make better decisions than we should. Like all bureaucracies, it is convinced that it is efficient, and acts accordingly. As a matter of fact, it consults the West if anything rather more than the East; or rather it consults nobody but can be influenced by vociferous noises, and the West is more expert at vociferous noises than the East.

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The most striking thing about the West, at any rate to the Montrealer, is the local pride of its various communities. It is a **THE WEST'S BIG FIGHT FOR BEAUTY** different pride, a more positive, constructive, intellectual pride, than that which, for example, makes an Easterner from Toronto express contempt for Hamilton, and vice versa. There is plenty of rivalry between Western cities, but it takes the form not of disparagement but of lively emulation. Calgary and Edmonton are the classic examples of this contentious tendency. Interviewers in these cities, who share the anxiety of their confreres elsewhere to make the interviewee say what they want him to say and not what he wants to say, devote their whole ingenuity to inducing each new visitor to declare that their city is clearly destined to be the greatest prairie city west of Winnipeg; and woe betide the poor wretch who allows himself to be put on record to this effect in behalf of Calgary and subsequently visits Edmonton. But it is not of journalistic badinage that I wish to speak.

The real rivalry of Western cities is to be found in the tremendous efforts which they have, one and all, made, in the face of great natural difficulties, to make their respective abiding-places as beautiful, as attractive, as

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they can be made. That many of them have mistakenly supposed that this end can be attained by the erection of innumerable five-lamp iron street-lights need cause neither surprise nor any sense of superiority in us Montrealers. Most of their efforts have been much more commendable. The money, the patience and the intelligence which the typical Western city lavishes on its parks entitle it to the highest credit, and are beginning already to achieve notable results, in spite of difficulty in many places of raising trees and even decent grass. In Lethbridge, which has perhaps the maximum of climatic difficulty to contend with, the municipality has run water-pipes over the surface of all the boulevards, and regularly irrigates them and trims them at public expense. But public authorities alone cannot secure a beautiful city if private householders do not co-operate; and it is the public spirit and architectural good sense and up-to-dateness of the Western city-dweller which are the real factors in making a beautiful city. And here the West has the inestimable advantage of starting afresh. The architectural monstrosities with which the newly-rich of National Policy days disfigured our Eastern residential streets are not to be found in the West; and the still more monstrous things with which the professional landlord adorns our cheap-flat

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thoroughfares in Montreal would not be tolerated by the building inspectors, nor indeed rented by any self-respecting tenant, in any community beyond the Great Lakes.

The rivers which thread their placid ways through the cities of the prairies are not highways of commerce, **RIVERS NATURAL** and their banks have **AND IMITATION** not been monopolised by transportation agencies and industrial establishments. This has enabled the home-planners of the West to utilise the river-banks in the most delightful fashion, and in Winnipeg, for example, the innumerable curves of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers are lined with charming gardens, broken here and there by waterside parks from which the public can see as much of the beauties of the district as the private owners. Calgary has river valleys, filled with well-designed homes (not for millionaires but for ordinary successful citizens), radiating in all directions. Saskatoon has treated its river well. It is typical of the Western spirit that Regina, which has no river handy, has manufactured a substantial lake by damming up an insignificant creek in front of the Parliament Buildings.

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The West's hatred for import duties and railway rates is largely the result of judicious

fanning of the
TEACHING THE WEST flame by West-
TO HATE THE EAST ern trades-
people. As in

the East, there have in the West been frequent and considerable increases in the price of various commodities in the last four years.

As we Easterners have done, so the Westerners have gone to the retail dealer, the only person in the whole procession of modern commerce with whom the consumer comes in immediate contact, and have demanded to know the reason or excuse for each successive raise. But here comes the difference. The Eastern retailer has blamed it vaguely and generally on the war, the cost of labour, the farmer, the Government, and even Providence. The Western retailer has been far more clever. He knows the susceptibilities

of his clients, and each time that he has clapped on an additional five cents on a commodity whose freight rate has been raised one-twenty-eighth part of a cent, he has murmured "railway rates" in a deep conspiratorial whisper, and his eyes have filled with tears, and the innocent clients have gone away with the feeling that he was one with themselves, and that everybody in the West was the victim of a gigantic extortion

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operation by the "magnates" of the East. Whereas the plain fact is that both the wholesalers and retailers in all lines of staple commodities are making very large profits throughout the West, and are taking every advantage of the general rising market. Competition between retailers is not very keen; the weaker dealers who were compelled to make all sorts of sacrifices in order to get a living have been eliminated during the early years of the war, and those who remain realize that this is a poor time for price-shaving, especially since any dealer who tried to clear his stock out in a hurry would probably have difficulty in replacing it as quickly as he would desire.

The situation in itself is not immoral; what is immoral about it is the manner in which it is being blamed on factors which have nothing to do with it. The desire of traders to make a profit on a market in which supply is short of demand is natural enough; and while the profit in many cases appears high in proportion to the cost of the article, it may not be in proportion to the capital valuation of the business. But it is deplorable that it should be made the excuse for a systematic fomenting of ill-feeling between one part of Canada and another.

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Economy in municipal administration has taken one very peculiar form in many cities of Western Canada.

ONE WAY TO SAVE The Board of Con-
A CITY'S MONEY trol theory of civic government was

prevalent there, as elsewhere in Canada, when the war broke out, and the form of legislation which happened to be employed to describe this system in nearly all the municipal charters (the Western Provinces imitate one another slavishly in the matter of legislation) provided that there shall be not more than a certain number of controllers but did not assign any minimum limit. All over the West, therefore, the administrative body has been reduced by general consent to two persons, one the mayor, elected by popular suffrage and usually a politician, and the other a species of city manager, appointed by the council and usually selected for experience in one or more of the civic departments. The object of cutting out the additional controllers was simply to save their salaries—a very worthy object, but it does not seem to have occurred to anybody that a board of two persons is a most unworkable body. If the two are equal in vested authority and in force of character, they will be constantly at a deadlock. If they are not, then the lesser of the two might just as well

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not be on the board. In the present state of affairs a deadlock is not such a very serious matter, for the policy most needed in Western, as in Eastern, municipalities is that of doing as little as possible. But there are times when a deadlock may even prevent retrenchment; and there will certainly come a time when constructive expenditure is again required in the West, and a strong executive will be needed to look after it.

The cutting down of the municipal controllers to the smallest possible number is

typical of the

THE WEST'S HATRED attitude of the
FOR HIGH SALARIES West towards

high-salaried

men. It is hard to get the Westerner to admit that a big man is worth a big salary; it is even hard to get some Westerners to admit that any one man is much bigger than any other man. Not that this error is confined to the West, for it is one of the commonest extravagancies of an ill-balanced democratic idealism all over Canada and the United States: but it is commoner in the West because the West is made up largely of one-man-size businesses, and is less familiar than the East with "Big Business" and its gigantic problems and responsibilities. This is the rock upon which I expect to see the Grain Grow-

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ers' Grain Company come, not possibly to grief but to some perilous adventures, some time in the near future. The Grain Company is Big Business, of the biggest sort, and has been built up by men with the capacity, the energy, the brains and the determination required to make a success of Big Business. I do not know whether these men are getting Big Business salaries or not; I only know that they are entitled to them, and that if they are not getting them they will eventually move off to other spheres where they will get them—which will prove my contention as well as any other method. But if they are getting them, or begin to get them hereafter, they will have to reckon some day with that powerful element among the grain growers which refuses to believe that any man is worth a Big Business salary, or indeed that any one grain grower is more competent to carry on the business of a many-million-dollars corporation than any other grain grower. It may be that before this happens the heads of the Grain Growers' Grain Company will have succeeded in teaching their shareholders what Big Business really is, and making them realise that they are profiting and profiting hugely, by one of the biggest pieces of Big Business in the whole Dominion. And then we shall all understand one another much better.

There is a faction in Winnipeg and elsewhere in the West, consisting for the most part of fairly young men, which is anxious to split Canada into two

THE SPLITTING UP OF CANADA

parts somewhere near the head of the Lakes, and thus relieve the great, glorious and progressive West from the incubus of the old, sordid and retrograde East. These young men have unlimited faith in the People, but only in the People of their own youthful country; they do not want to have anything to do with the People of the East. Their view is that the People of the East are not really People, they are Slaves of the Interests; and they declare in so many words that you cannot have a great Canadian nation half slave and half free. The remark is not original to them, but it comes in handy.

One of these gentlemen came up to me in Winnipeg at the conclusion of a few remarks which I had been making concerning the difficulty of getting eight million people to own a railway and exercise their ownership intelligently, watchfully and wisely. "Mr. Sandwell," he said, very solemnly and with a suspicion of tears in his eyes, "if I thought that the Canadian people were as rotten as you say they are, I would pray to the Almighty that the Germans might conquer us

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and show us how a country ought to be run."

I was not conscious of having said that the Canadian people were rotten, it being my conviction merely that any democracy, however high-minded and capable, is ill-adapted for the carrying on of a complicated business. I began to endeavour to make this clear to my protesting friend. But before I could do so, another member of the gathering came up and pitched into him in a way which promptly diverted the channel of discussion.

"What right have you to talk about the Canadian people?" said this new arrival to my friend. "I consider that any man who wants to divide the Dominion of Canada into two parts, especially in the middle of a war, is a traitor, and has no right to talk about the Canadian people or Public Ownership or anything else. Yes, sir, a traitor; that is what I said and I mean it. Three cheers for Confederation!"

I was a little afraid of the debate taking a form which might have damaged the lavish decorations of the Fort Garry Hotel, so I hastened to soothe friend number two by assuring him that I was certain that friend number one would not advocate any separation that was not by mutual consent; and peace being restored, I began to enquire into the political doctrines represented by friend number one. It appeared that he and some

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others with him had given up all hope of Western Canada developing into a terrestrial paradise while hampered by the connection with Eastern Canada, and therefore advocated the establishment of a separate self-governing Dominion West of the Great Lakes. He was an American by birth, but did not favour annexation to the United States, which country he also considered to be too much dominated by the Effete East.

I do not think that friend number one was really worthy of the very important title of traitor, but it must be admitted that he chose

an ill-fitting time

HOW TO CORRECT for the advocacy of
SECTIONALISM the tearing-up of
the British North

America Act. That document may not be sacred in an age when few things are sacred, but it serves fairly well as a working basis upon which we may fight out the present war, and it will take a lot of trouble to replace it whenever it is torn up. But friend number one was merely an extreme instance of the localism which is pretty prevalent in the West, and which inclines at present to regard Winnipeg as the true capital and metropolis of the real Canada, and Montreal and even Toronto as mere brakes upon the wheel of progress. The American

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West has much the same feeling about Chicago. It is corrected and held in check in the States by the existence of a considerable national literature which is wholly centered in the real national metropolis, namely New York; but Canada has not yet acquired that means of promoting intellectual solidarity. The best check upon the growth of excessive localism in the West of Canada is the fact that most of the educated professions (which provide the leaders of the social and political life of the community) are the product of Eastern universities; and it is highly important that our older centres of learning should continue to send out all over the country a supply of men trained in culture, moderation and Canadian national feeling. I do not suggest that the Western colleges are not producing such men, but it does seem undesirable that the West should be led and educated for the next forty years or so by purely Western-trained men without a strong admixture of Easterners—while a good infusion of Westerners would perform invaluable services in the East. An exchange system for professors, preachers and writers would be worth considering.

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LOCALISM reaches its sublime embodiment in the movement, very noisy if not very serious, for the separation of Vancouver Island from British Columbia and the Dominion of Canada, and its reconstitution as a Crown Colony like Newfoundland. Victoria is seething with grievances. It has a class of citizens who regard Vancouver Island as the Ireland of Canada, the victim of systematic repression and injustice. Like the Irish, they are unanimous in being "agin'" the Government, but highly divided on what they are "for." Victoria was intended by nature for the ideal residential city of Canada, and is in receipt of a steady drift of people who have made their pile elsewhere in the Dominion and are looking for a spot where they may spend their latter years in getting used to the comforts which they expect to find in heaven. But there is a class of Victorians who are not content with this, and who demand "industries," regardless of the fact that a great industrial expansion would at once destroy the residential attractiveness of their city. They expect both the provincial and federal governments to disregard the Strait of Juan de Fuca and treat them just as if they were on the mainland, and every public institution erected in Vancouver they take as an insult.

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THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES have for some years past been pursuing a policy of uniformity of legislation, and more recently British Columbia has shown an inclination to join with them. It is an admirable policy, especially in view of the fact that the social and economic conditions of all four Provinces, but especially of the prairie area, are fundamentally similar. But it is having one curious effect, in emphasizing the feeling of unity between the different parts of the West and of differentiation between the West and the East. We can get together with our fellow Provinces in the West, is the feeling of many Manitobans and Albertans, but we cannot get together with the East. Even the agriculturists of the prairies find it difficult to get on common ground with the agriculturists of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, in spite of their common business. A really national farmers' organization would help much in developing a national sentiment, and the Canadian Council of Agriculture is doing good work in striving toward that end.

WESTERNERS who realize and deplore the detachment of the West (and they are numerous enough) have many suggestions to make for its betterment. One of the most interesting that I met with was given me by

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a prominent banker, who perhaps might not like to have his name mentioned on account of the probable attitude of various interests towards his proposal. In brief, it was the suggestion that Canada's railway rate policy should be revised so as to throw more of the burden of sustaining the railways upon the freight business and less upon the passenger business. He held that the present schedule of fares was largely prohibitive of passenger traffic between East and West except for business purposes, and that a reduction of fares would greatly promote social interchange, at any rate among the classes who have leisure to make three-week or four-week trips or more. The railways of course have to have their revenue, but he maintained that it could be taken out of freight business without any serious detriment to the consuming public, and that in normal times the loss caused by reduction of passenger fares would be largely made up by the increase in volume of passenger business. It is an interesting proposal, and shows how seriously some Westerners are regarding the situation.

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MEANWHILE, one of the noblest actions that could be performed by any millionaire who feels himself approaching that bourne across which no traveller ever takes his bank book or his scrip, is the endowment of a fund for providing young newspaper workers with trips across this Dominion, and for bringing them into contact with the representative people whom they ought to meet. A sort of Rhodes Scholarship, in fact, with the scholars moving about from place to place instead of penned up in one musty university, studying life instead of text books. The existence of such a fund would in itself tend to draw into the newspaper business a larger number of educated and ambitious young persons than it can at present command; for the scholarships should of course be confined to those who have done bona fide newspaper work for two or three years. A million dollars, which is a mere trifle in the will of the average Canadian rich man, would provide seventy thousand a year, which would give a year's travelling course for twenty or thirty reporters and editors each year. I can suggest an excellent man to take charge of the organization work and to superintend the travelling parties.